

## El's Sisters by Robertdoc

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**Summary:**

El had a sister for a few days in Chicago. But it wasn't until she spent time with more than one Wheeler that she really learned what it was like to have a big sister - and a little one. El/Nancy and El/Holly bonding, post Season Two.

## El's Sisters

### Kali

El has a sister.

They weren't born from the same mama, and they live in different cities, but they are sisters all the same.

Or at least they were for a few days in Chicago.

Her sister taught her a lot. A lot of it was good. She gave her a new bitchin' look, a new understanding of her powers, and the anger she needed that would eventually save her real home. And her real friends.

It could be argued that she never should have made that trip. It had been argued, by herself and by Hopper when they had time to talk about it. And if she never went away, she could have saved her friends faster, kept Will from being possessed longer, and saved at least one person who died while she was gone.

From that way of looking at it, it was a complete and destructive waste of time. Even before considering the bad man she almost killed.

But she still got to have a sister. A sister who encouraged her to kill, to orphan children who were more innocent than she was, and to think about people she never wanted to think about – or find – again. A sister who tried to talk her into letting her friends and family die.

But it was her *sister*.

Until that last night together, having a sister made El feel...more complete. She felt that way around Mike, and Hopper, and Dustin and Lucas, and was just starting to feel that way around Joyce, Will and Jonathan. But having that feeling around Kali during the good times was...just different somehow.

It made her heart feel full. Less broken. More hopeful. It made her feel that for everything she'd lost and was convinced she'd never

have, and barely felt like she deserved to have, she was capable – even deserving, maybe – of getting it back. It made her feel like...she finally had something she didn't have to lose.

If she couldn't keep....other people around, and wasn't allowed to keep others, then she could at least have this. She could lose Papas, friends, and....boys who were friends, but for a few great days, a sister felt like something that was finally, truly *hers*. Even after years apart, it was still hers.

And for a while, it felt like it was finally something – someone – that would never leave her. Never reject her. Never lock her up. Never keep her from the things she really wanted. Who would always fight to keep her. And who would always think that nothing she did or had done made her a monster.

But when El returned to Hawkins, she realized the difference between thinking she had those things and actually having them almost right away.

Yet there was still something missing. A kind of emptiness that only her sister really filled, if only for their first moments together. As much as Mike, Hopper, her old friends and the Byers were filling so many other holes and broken things inside, they couldn't fill the kind of broken things that a sister could.

Even though the way Kali filled them turned out to be so... incomplete. Flawed. Empty in its own way whenever her fits of anger were done.

But El didn't know any other way, or any other sister, that could do better.

Not until she started talking to more than one Wheeler.

## **Nancy**

Nancy was the first older girl she ever looked up to, but that was for her dresses, her wigs and all her other pretty things.

Now she was actually learning so much more from her.

It took quite a while for that to happen. First El had to compromise on how often she could see anybody. Then Joyce helped Hopper compromise on letting El go to school in September, two months before her last year of 'laying low' ended. Then Hopper and Mike's parents had to compromise on letting her come over to the Wheeler house every Saturday, and then Mike had to compromise on letting El talk to people other than him and the boys when she was there, if only for an hour.

Finally, Nancy had to compromise on coming over to the cabin after school once a week. But unlike everyone else, she didn't refuse her compromise at first. Maybe that didn't make it a compromise at all.

Nancy wasn't halfway happy to help El get better at reading, writing and all other school subjects. And she wasn't halfway happy to teach her about things outside of school that regular teenage girls did outside of a cabin.

More often than not, she looked all the way happy. In fact, whenever El learned new words and facts all by herself, or got a lot of answers right on Nancy's quizzes, or said that the worst people at Nancy's school sounded like mouthbreathers, her smiles and laughter were almost as bright and powerful as her brother's.

Getting that kind of reaction from Mike when she did or said something good made El feel...warm all over. Those kind of reactions were rarer from Hopper, but El knew it was extra special when he got them. She felt adored getting them from Joyce, and felt accepted when she got them from Dustin, Lucas and then Max, Will and Jonathan.

With Nancy, it gave her a sense of...pride. That was the closest word she could think of, anyway.

Nancy never seemed to doubt she could learn just like a normal girl could. When El got better at her lessons, Nancy never looked surprised she could do such a thing – and it was like she never doubted she could. When El was convinced she would never understand something, Nancy never looked tempted to agree.

She just found other ways to help El learn, and she looked so...proud

when she finally understood them. The thought that someone like Nancy could be proud of her, and could be happy to teach her instead of grumpy, annoyed or afraid....and could want her to succeed for reasons that had nothing to do with revenge, killing people or keeping secrets....

Eleven had never been taught like that. Not by her first Papa, and not by her second all the time at first. And not by....

In any case, one day in Nancy's room, she even told El she only had this much fun learning and studying with one other person. Before El could ask who that was, she saw Nancy looking at a photo on her dresser.

A photo of someone El had met before. Except it wasn't in this dimension. And in this picture, there were glasses on her face instead of slugs. And in that picture, she wasn't...gone.

Back then, she wasn't gone. Because El hadn't opened up the gate and let out the monster that killed her. Because it was before El didn't find her in the Void in time.

Did Nancy even know that? If she did, then why would she have spent all this time, or *any* time, helping her?

If she didn't know, then maybe she didn't have to know. Then El could keep learning from her, get to go to school with Mike and the boys, and be like a normal high school girl.

The kind that Barb couldn't be any more.

No. And besides.... "Friends don't lie."

Well, Nancy would only be her friend for one more minute, but she still deserved to know.

"I'm the reason she's dead," El said before pointing to Barb's picture. "I opened the gate. She's not your...study buddy anymore because of me," she continued, using that weird phrase Nancy said a few study sessions ago. Back when she still thought El was good enough to learn.

Not long ago, Joyce tried to teach El not to apologize so much for things that weren't her fault. And somehow, she, Will and Jonathan had gotten her to forgive herself for all the things she thought she'd done to hurt them. But they weren't here now, and this was about how she hurt Nancy by taking her best friend away.

El still wanted to look into Nancy's angry eyes to say she was sorry, before she was kicked out of her room forever. But when she did so, she saw that Nancy's eyes didn't look angry. They didn't look happy, but they weren't angry either.

She couldn't make out any emotions in her eyes at all.

"Did anyone tell you what I did? The night she was taken?" El could only shake her head no, puzzled why the yelling hadn't started yet.

"We were at a party. Barb didn't want to be there. But I left her there to...spend time with a boy. And then that monster took her. And I couldn't hear her calling for help," Nancy revealed. "Now that you know that, do you think it was *my* fault?"

El just looked at Nancy, as tears welled up in her eyes while waiting for the answer. But everything else in her eyes told El that Nancy already expected her answer to be yes. And that she wouldn't disagree about it.

Something then surged in El. Something that didn't surge in her when she thought Barb's death was her own fault. But when she saw Nancy expecting to hear that it was her own, something inside compelled her to say a very strong "No."

"Why?" Nancy said, unconvinced. "And don't say it's because it's your fault. Because that's *not* it."

Something else surged in El, just from the utter conviction of Nancy's words. There's no way she should have said....*those* words about El's guilt, but she did. But then why else wasn't it Nancy's fault?

There were so many reasons, really. But which ones would convince her?

"Because...." El waited, forcing herself to say the right words right

away for once. She remembered everything she could, from words to everything she already knew Nancy did in November 1983. Somehow, her memory and her new knowledge came together to give her an answer.

“Because...you didn’t know.” El realized. “You didn’t know about monsters then. You *couldn’t* have known. If you did, you would have been there. You would have fought them like you fought the Demogorgon and Mind Flayer because...you’re a good person. A brave person.”

El hoped she said that with as much conviction as Nancy. Just in case, she added, “But it’s *not* your fault you didn’t know then.”

Nancy’s face went blank again, until she wiped her eyes and gave her that weird, warm, wonderful look of pride again. “And that’s exactly why it’s not your fault either. You didn’t know what it was doing that night, and you couldn’t have known. But if you did, I know you would have tried to save her.”

It would have been easy and it would have felt real good to agree with her. But as El kept thinking back to those first days out of the lab – or rather, that one day where Lucas yelled at her for leading them away from the lab – she knew she couldn’t lie. “No...I was too scared then.”

Nancy took her time before admitting “I guess I would have been too. It took buying guns with Jonathan to get me *close* to ready. If I was unarmed at that pool alone, not knowing anything....”

“But you know lots of things now,” El reminded, before correcting herself. “A *lot* of things. Sorry.” Yet that apology left her feeling lighter than the one she planned earlier. And Nancy certainly looked much better than El had expected too.

“I do. And I know you and me took care of all the other monsters and humans that hurt Barb too,” Nancy said. “If that doesn’t totally make up for what we did – by *accident* – then maybe it makes it easier to live with than it used to. Maybe it’ll help us make sure no one else we love suffers like that again. If that’s what Barb ended up dying for, maybe it wasn’t for nothing.”

Shaking off her guilt much easier than before, Nancy focused right on El to say, “But I know she didn’t die so we could blame people who don’t deserve it. People who deserve a lot more. And are finally starting to get it.”

El didn’t completely understand the analogy, but the warmth and silent promises from Nancy’s eyes filled in a lot. “I’m...” El started, yet stopped herself before she could apologize once again.

After years of doing monstrous things and being taught by human monsters, it was still too easy to apologize for causing trouble. Even when that trouble was someone telling her something wasn’t her fault. Even when it actually almost made sense.

Instead, El fought off her instincts and looked at the picture of Barb, then understood how she really wanted to end her sentence. “I wish I could have met her.”

Nancy’s smile broke out wider as she admitted, “I do too. Not just because she’d be alive. Because I know she would have loved you. Just like everyone else.”

Nancy didn’t say in so many exact words that ‘everyone else’ included her. But it didn’t take much for El to realize it did.

She knew it when they celebrated El passing her exam that summer to get into high school. She knew it that one night when Mike wasn’t the first Wheeler to wake her up from her nightmares while she slept over. She knew it when Nancy opened up about her own nightmares that still got to her every once in a while, long after the worst of her trauma should have been over too.

And she really knew it during the worst of the early days in high school. Or rather, the worst early day when Mike and the guys weren’t near her when the ‘mean girls’ picked on her, and it took everything El had to remember not to cry or crush their brains.

She held out just long enough before Nancy marched over to them, and gave them a lashing out that would live on in Hawkins High history long after El graduated.



Yet the words El remembered best from that day were the ones Nancy muttered under her breath as she led El away. El knew enough to know Nancy didn't mean for her to hear them, and would be too angry to talk right now if she brought it up.

So El never brought up or asked why Nancy included the words "Mess with my sister...." during the angry rant under her breath.

Everything that Nancy had done and would keep doing already told her why.

## **Holly**

Nancy helped El become the regular teenage girl she always should have been.

But Holly...Holly made El feel like the kind of little girl she should have been 10 years ago. And she did it without even trying.

It took some time for the Wheeler parents to accept having a telekinetic girl/former accused Russian girl near their son. It got easier when her adopted father/police chief told them more, and assured them he had restrictions in place for their time together. It got much easier when their son's moody behavior over most of 1984 mostly vanished in 1985, especially when they traced it back to El.

Even more of their reluctance vanished when they saw their daughter tutor her, vouch for her and get her into more proper dresses than that punk look from late 1984.

For Karen Wheeler, the very last of her doubts vanished when she saw her with her other daughter.

On the initially rare times when El wasn't playing in Mike's basement with the boys, or up studying in Nancy's room, Karen saw her wandering around the living room. During one of those times, she saw Holly run into her, and then saw El looking at her like...like she'd never seen anything like her before.

It took a while for Karen to realize that maybe she never had.

It took a little longer for El to realize why.

After going through most of her post-lab life with kids her age, one and sometimes two adults, and one and sometimes two or three older teenagers, El had never really been around a much littler girl, or a much littler kid of any gender. There was the one girl whose mama told her how to get to Mike's school, but she didn't have the time to talk to her, even if it had been allowed.

But around Mike's much littler sister, who she was allowed to talk to if she wanted, and who didn't really know who she was and what she could do, El didn't really know what to do at first. So she just followed along with what Holly wanted to do.

The all powerful girl who destroyed a monster and locked an even bigger one up had no strength to resist a five-year-old, as she showed her her favorite TV shows, her room and her favorite toys. All of it was for girls so much younger than El, and some of it was stuff the likes of which she hadn't seen since...

....the rainbow room.

But this was a room where no one would interrupt playtime to do experiments on them. A room where toys were meant to be played with for fun, not to keep girls distracted before their torture. A room where mothers could come in and see their little girls anytime, not get dragged out and have their minds flayed for trying.

It was everything El was never given then, and was supposed to be too old to enjoy now. Right down to her little playmate.

Well screw that, as El once heard Nancy say – and had barely avoided saying to Hopper during an argument.

But she made sure to use much more kid friendly language when she asked Holly if she wanted to draw. By now, Will had taught her some pretty good tricks that Holly might find fun too. And she did.

As El's visits to the Wheelers became more frequent over the spring and summer, her time got more divided. Playing with Mike and the party and learning from Nancy took up enough time over there, yet when Karen saw how good El was with Holly and how much she enjoyed her favorite things, that ate up the little free time she had

left over.

But El didn't mind, and only needed one talk with Mike to make sure he didn't mind either. In fact, El, Karen and Holly all loved it in their own way.

Holly finally had a playmate who wasn't too old like Nancy, or too busy with other boys like Mike. As Karen grew to trust El more, she found someone who could look after and entertain Holly when she couldn't, at least on El's designated visit days. Fortunately, as the summer went on and Hopper's restrictions started easing up, those days piled up more and more.

But while Holly had a playmate and Karen had a temporary babysitter, El had something far rarer.

She already had a Wheeler who adored and worshiped everything she did, but it was different with Holly than with Mike. Holly didn't want to kiss her like Mike, didn't know about her powers like Mike, and believed she was just extraordinary for being a bigger girl who still wanted to play dolls and tea parties and watch cartoons with her.

Even when El accidentally revealed her powers by sending a pillow over to catch Holly's fall just in time, Holly wasn't scared off. More importantly, by then El was trusted enough by the entire Wheeler family and Hopper to let Holly know about them. And even more importantly, when Holly promised not to tell any friends or classmates about them, she knew enough about the value of a promise to never ever break it, thanks to El.

So she understood why they couldn't play outside yet, with or without El's powers. She understood that El might have to go away if the wrong person knew, although Hopper's scare tactics didn't have to go that much further. And through all that, Holly still thought El was the coolest and best big girl ever, regardless of how often she showed her powers.

On day 193, El was taught the word "responsibility." Hundreds of days later, as she was trusted more to look after Holly, she really began to understand it. On those few hours a week with Holly, she wondered if this was how Hopper, Joyce, Karen, Nancy, Jonathan

and Mr. Wheeler felt all the time.

She never imagined that someone like...*her* could get to feel that way, at any time. There were many things she did now that she never got to dream of doing before, but this....to be trusted with the safety, security and play time of such a little, fragile, *special* girl that looked up to her just like El looked up to her big sister....

She wished she could remember if Kali ever looked at her like that in the rainbow room. But she probably didn't. Even if El could remember, there's no way that her and Kali back then could have been like her and Holly were now.

Especially when it was winter time, and she was allowed to take Holly outside into the snow.

While El had more than enough time to learn from the boys and Max about snowball warfare on snow days, she still loved calmer, more peaceful walks in the snow with Holly. She loved watching over her when she played outside with friends her age, and she especially loved that Karen and Hopper trusted her to watch her alone.

And to not send snowballs flying out of nowhere towards Karen's snowball war enemies. Which she only did that *one* time.

One day in late January, El and Holly were by themselves as they walked through the snowy woods. Holly was running through the snow ahead of El, and was starting to go a bit too fast for her to catch up.

"Holly, could you slow down?" El asked. But Holly didn't listen, as she saw a nice big hill up ahead. She rushed towards it faster without looking back or listening to El.

"Holly, wait! Wait until I get there!" El insisted. But Holly started climbing the hill anyway, getting to the top before El could get to her – and before she could stop her from wobbling off the top.

"Holly!!" El yelled. That was all she could do, since she fell off the other side and El couldn't see her well enough to magically stop her. But she was too paralyzed by fear to do anything in that split second

anyway.

Yet when she snapped out of it, it took her a second to wave the entire hill away and get to Holly, who was lying on the ground and sniffing.

“Are you hurt? Are you okay?” El asked rapidly.

“I...I think so,” Holly answered quietly, although she winced when she sat up. But El knew it could have been much worse. If she landed head first, face first, broke her arm or leg, skinned her knee, all on her watch....

All on her watch because she didn’t listen.

For once, El knew this wasn’t her own fault. But if she’d really hurt herself, no one would believe that. Then she’d get yelled at, Karen would never let her near Holly again, Mike and Nancy wouldn’t let her near them again, Hopper wouldn’t let her near *anyone* again....

All because Holly didn’t listen.

“I told you to wait for me! What if you really hurt yourself?! Do you know what could have happened?! What were you thinking?!”

If they were in the house, El would have blown out every lightbulb and glass jar by now. As it stood, all the snow on the trees around them was falling to the ground, although neither El nor Holly took notice.

All El saw in her head was herself losing everything because of one dumb mistake. All Holly saw was El’s face turning red from it. “Well? What do you have to say for yourself?!” El lashed out.

She barely heard Holly’s quiet, scared “I’m sorry...” Yet it was so loud to El in so many other ways.

Now all she saw was her and Kali’s quiet, scared five-year-old selves when the bad men punished them –for reasons that made far less sense now than they did then. Just like yelling at Holly suddenly did.

Then she saw Hopper during one of their many arguments over El’s

safety and being seen. Yet this time when she looked back at his face, she didn't just see what she thought was unreasonable anger, but very reasonable fear. Horrible, scary fear like the kind she felt for Holly just a minute ago, and felt harder than ever now that her anger at her was gone.

Then there was nothing left to distract her from the horrible, scary fear on Holly's face. Fear she had because of her.

And here El had thought that just *one* person would never look at her that way. But of course that couldn't happen.

No. Thinking of herself and what could happen to her was why she got so angry in the first place. Well, part of it. Maybe it was easier to feel that than deal with the fear she had about Holly. Maybe that's how Hopper felt all those times he wouldn't let her do something.

The bad men didn't feel that. El felt that so badly now. And yet she yelled at Holly like she was a bad man.

El was filled with so much shame, she couldn't even reach out to touch Holly, for fear she'd flinch like so many others had at her. And that really wasn't fair.

Holly didn't deserve to be afraid of anyone, no matter how many hills she fell off. She deserved someone who would make her feel brave and strong and always, *always* loved no matter what....it was what a *responsible* person would give her.

Like Hopper would have. Like Karen, Joyce, Mike, Jonathan, Nancy. Anyone like that who El wished she could have met when she was five.

What would they have said to her back then?

"I'm sorry, Holly," El was inspired to say. "I shouldn't yell at you just because...I was so scared you were hurt. And I never want you to feel that scared, even when you make a mistake. You're too important to me for that."

"Really? Even when I didn't listen to you?" Holly said, her uncertainty breaking El's heart so much more. But it did help her

think deeper about what Hopper and Joyce would say if they were here – and had said to El one time or another.

“Listen. Even if I get mad, you could *never* make me mad enough to stop caring about you,” El assured, which instantly made Holly look much better. Going a step further, El asked, “But do you promise you won’t try anything like that again? At least not while I can’t protect you? Or your parents or Mike or Nancy?”

“I promise, El,” Holly quickly said, and El immediately believed her.

“Then I’m not mad anymore,” El promised back. “Now I’m just so happy you’re okay.”

She was happy enough to finally reach for Holly’s hand, now that there was a chance she’d take it. And she did, without looking afraid or anything. She just looked relieved and okay and happy El was there with her....all the things El feared she’d never see on Holly’s face again.

“I’m still sorry I scared you,” Holly said, louder than her last apology. But this time El didn’t want to accept it.

“You have nothing to be sorry for now. As long as you’ve learned your lesson, that’s good enough. *You’re* still good enough, and I’m proud of you.”

As all Wheelers seemed good at doing, Holly’s smile of adoration and love made El warm and fuzzy enough to burst. Especially now. But she settled for squeezing her hand and helping her get back on her feet.

“Can we go back inside now?” Holly asked.

“Of course we can. I’ll check you for boo boos, just in case, and then we’ll play in your room. We can have your dolls fall off stuff for us! The ones I don’t catch in mid-air, anyway,” El offered.

“Okay!” Holly cheered, everything forgiven and mostly forgotten. As Holly kept holding El’s hand and led her back to the house, El forgot everything but the feeling she always had when Holly did this.

The feeling of being slightly less broken.

But by this point, it didn't feel like there was that much more to fix.

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El has sisters. Their names are Nancy and Holly Wheeler.

Holly connected her to a past she never got the chance to have. Nancy helped pave the way for a future she never dared to dream of. And with Mike helping to make her present so good, all the Wheelers had everything covered for her.

All El thought of was Mike while she was at the cabin. Yet now that she could finally come and go to the Wheeler house, she couldn't imagine going there without seeing all of them anymore.

It took a little while longer, but soon she stopped imagining they would ever leave her too. Soon she could accept she didn't need to use powers, not use powers, kill, not kill, be angry, be happy, or be El, Eleven or Jane to keep her sisters.

They just wanted....*her*.

So did Mike, Hopper, Joyce, Will, Dustin, Lucas, Jonathan, and eventually Max and Karen. Yet the wounds that Nancy and Holly healed were something deeper.

El didn't realize just how much until several years later. When she realized that everything they did already made her ready to care for the little sister Joyce and Hopper gave her for her very own.

Still, it took a few more years until Nancy and Holly were legally her sisters too. But that delay was mainly Mike's fault.

THE END